

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 GUATEM 01614 162243Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
/063 W

-----014729 171033Z /13

R 162120Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9568
INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 1614

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: GT, PINT, OAS
SUBJ: POST-ELECTION ATMOSPHERICS

1. SUMMARY: THE MLN HAS CALLED OFF FURTHER PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS IN GUATEMALA CITY. DESPITE A SERIES OF BOMBING INCIDENTS, OUTWARD CALM IS RETURNING TO GUATEMALA. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, REITERATING THEIR NEUTRALITY, HAVE ADDED THEIR VOICE TO THAT OF THE LUCAS FORCES AND MOST OF THE PRESS TO A CALL FOR DIALOGUE AND EARLY REFORM OF THE MUCH-ABUSED ELECTORAL SYSTEM. THE OAS ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL, A GUATEMALAN, HAS ENDORSED THE LEGITIMACY OF LUCAS' ELECTION. END SUMMARY

2. THE MLN HAS GIVEN AMPLE INDICATION THAT IT DOES NOT INTEND TO SILENTLY ACQUIESCE TO THE LUCAS VICTORY. HOW MUCH OF THIS IS POSTURING AND HOW MUCH CONCERTED EFFORT TO UNDERMINE THE STATUS QUO IS NOT YET CLEAR. THE PARTY ORGANIZED LATE AFTERNOON DEMONSTRATIONS IN DOWNTOWN GUATEMALA CITY THREE DAYS RUNNING, BUT ANNOUNCED MARCH 15 THAT THAT DAY'S RALLY AND MARCH ON THE NATIONAL PALACE WOULD BE THE LAST FOR THE TIME BEING, IN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 GUATEM 01614 162243Z

DEFERENCE TO THE APPROACHING EASTER HOLIDAYS, BUT MORE LIKELY THIS WAS BECAUSE OF EXPECTATION THEY WOULD SOON REACH POINT OF DIMINISHING RETURNS. THE MLN SERVED NOTICE THAT DEMONSTRATIONS WOULD BE HELD IN THE INTERIOR.

3. THE MLN APPEARS TO BE EXHAUSTING EVERY LEGAL MEANS TO VOID THE ELECTIONS RESULTS. THIS IS WINDOW DRESSING, HOWEVER.

PARTY OFFICIALS CONCEDE PRIVATELY LITTLE CHANCE OF SUCCESS. WE SUSPECT THE TACTIC IS DESIGNED TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE MILITARY, TO COUNTERACT THE MLN'S PUBLIC IMAGE AS A PARTY OF VIOLENCE, AND TO REASSURE THE PARTY FAITHFUL.

4. HOWEVER, GUATEMALA CITY'S EVENING CALM WAS SHATTERED MARCH 14 BY BOMB EXPLOSIONS AT THE DISTRIBUTOR OF FORD AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY AND THE GUATEMALAN FARMERS' ASSOCIATION (AGA). TWO GAS STATIONS WERE THE TARGET OF MOLOTOV COCKTAILS. THE PREVIOUS DAY POLICE SUCCESSFULLY DISARMED A HAND-GRENADE RIGGED UP AT THE CHAMBER OF INDUSTRIES. THE POPULAR BELIEF IS THAT THE MLN WAS BEHIND ALL OF THESE INCIDENTS, AS WELL AS SIMILAR ONES REPORTED IN PREVIOUS EMBASSY MESSAGES. A RASH OF SHOOTINGS IN RURAL AREAS HAS ALSO BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO FEUDING BETWEEN MLN AND PRO-LUCAS MILITANTS. MILITARY UNITS IN AND AROUND GUATEMALA CITY HAVE APPARENTLY RETURNED TO NEAR NORMAL STATUS AFTER THEIR ELECTION ALERT.

5. LUCAS FORCES ARE HITTING BACK AT THE MLN IN AN UNATTRIBUTED PAID AD REPRODUCING THAT PART OF THE 1965 ELECTORAL LAW, APPROVED BY PERALTA AZURDAI WHEN HE WAS HEAD OF GOVERNMENT, WHICH PROVIDES FOR THE SUSPENSION OF POLITICAL PARTIES WHICH, INTER ALIA, DISTURB PUBLIC ORDER.

6. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, MEANWHILE, HAVE REITERATED THEIR NEUTRALITY AS BETWEEN THE LUCAS AND PERALTA AZURDIA CAMPS. CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 GUATEM 01614 162243Z

THEY ARE NOW CALLING FOR "DIALOGUE" AND REFORM OF THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM TO ENSURE AGAINST THE IRREGULARITIES THEY MAINTAIN MADE A MOCKERY OF THE ELECTIONS. THE DCG ASSERTS IT WILL NOT PARTICIPATE IN ANY MORE ELECTIONS UNTIL THE ELECTORAL LAW IS OVERHAULED TO PROVIDE PROTECTIONS AGAINST FRAUD. A NUMBER OF NEWSPAPERS HAVE JOINED THE CHORUS OF THOSE ADVOCATING ELECTORAL REFORM, SOMETHING LUCAS HIMSELF SAID HE FAVORED, ONCE HIS VICTORY WAS ASSURED. INTERESTINGLY, THE LATEST CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC STATEMENT EXPRESSES APPRECIATION TO THE "200,000 VOTERS" WHO SUPPORTED THEIR CANDIDATE. WHILE THIS FIGURE IS SUBSTANTIALLY LARGER THAN THE 157,000 VOTES ATTRIBUTED TO PERALTA MENDEZ IN THE OFFICIAL COUNT, IT IS CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN THE TALLY FOR EITHER LUCAS OR PERALTA AZURDIA.

7. THE LATTER CALLED PRESIDENT LAUGERUD MARCH 15 AND REPORTEDLY WAS TOLD THAT THE PRESIDENT APPROVED THE MLN'S LEGAT APPROACH TO THEIR ELECTORAL GRIEVANCES. ASKED BY REPORTERS WHETHER HE WOULD REQUEST AN OAS INQUIRY, PERALTA AZURDIA REPLIED THAT "FOREIGN ORGANISMS" HAVE NO ROLE TO PLAY.

8. THE OAS HAS, HOWEVER, ENTERED THE PICTURE IN THE FORM OF MESSAGES, DULY PUBLISHED IN THE LOCAL PRESS, TO BOTH LUCAS AND

LAUGERUD, FROM OAS ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL JORGE LUIS ZELAYA CORONADO. LUCAS WAS CONGRATULATED FOR "THE TRIUMPH OBTAINED IN LEGITIMATE, HARD-FOUGHT AND ARDUOUS ELECTORAL CONTEST;" LAUGERUD, FOR ASSURING AN ELECTION WHICH "ADHERED COMPLETELY TO CONSTITUTIONAL NORMS." THESE MESSAGES HAVE RAISED EYEBROWS, INCLUDING SPECULATION THAT ZELAYA CORONADO MAY SEE HIMSELF AS FOREIGN MINISTER MATERIAL. WHATEVER THE INSPIRATION, ZELAYA, IT WILL BE RECALLED, LEFT GUATEMALA IN THE EARLY SIXTIES AFTER THE PERALTA AZURDIA GOVERNMENT OUTLAWED HIS POLITICAL PARTY.
BOSTER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION RESULTS, CIVIL DISORDERS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978GUATEM01614
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780119-0031
Format: TEL
From: GUATEMALA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780362/aaaabzsu.tel
Line Count: 126
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 89244bc6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3312938
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POST-ELECTION ATMOSPHERICS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, GT, OAS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/89244bc6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014